

ANTON L. C. PORTMAN.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 587.]

APRIL 6, 1860.

MR. HUMPHREY, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Anton L. C. Portman, late clerk to Commodore M. C. Perry, while in command of the East India squadron, praying additional compensation for his services as Dutch interpreter during the negotiations of the treaty with Japan, have had the same under consideration, and now report:

That it appears from the evidence before the committee (portions of which are hereunto annexed) that the petitioner, Mr. Portman, was the clerk of Commodore M. C. Perry while in the command of the East India squadron, from the 17th of April, 1852, until the return of the frigate Mississippi in April, 1855, during one year of which time he also acted as commodore's secretary, and during all which period of three years he received the rated pay of \$500 a year as such clerk.

That it had been provided in the preliminary regulations that the negotiations attending the proposed treaty with Japan should be conducted in the Chinese language, and Mr. Williams was employed as interpreter in that language at a salary of \$500 per month. It became manifest that the difficulties and embarrassments attending the use of that language in official documents and intercourse were so great that the Japanese ministers refused to conduct the negotiations further therein, and it was accordingly provided by article 7th of the "additional regulations" that "henceforth the Chinese language should not be employed in official communications between the two governments, except when there was no Dutch interpreter."

That Mr. Portman, being perfectly acquainted with the Dutch language, was employed by Commodore Perry from the time the squadron left the United States in translating from that and various other languages books and papers for the use of the commodore, relating to the history, manners, and customs of this singular people, and thus rendering most important aid to the commodore minister in his preliminary preparations for the negotiations. That after the arrival of the squadron in the Japanese waters, the services of Mr. Portman were

in constant requisition as interpreter in the communications with the authorities there, and after the substitution of the Dutch in place of the Chinese language, as the medium of intercourse above referred to, all the delicate and most responsible duties of interpreter in settling the terms and finally drawing up the treaty, were confided to Mr. Portman, and the intelligence, ability, and fidelity with which he performed those duties are abundantly certified in the letters and testimonials of Commodore Perry and the other officers of the expedition. Not only was a large amount of interpreting and translating thrown upon the memorialist, but the final engrossed copies of the treaty exchanged by the parties were prepared by him.

It appears to the committee that the services of Mr. Portman were of very great importance to the expedition, and indeed, after the refusal of the Japanese ministers to treat in the Chinese language, much of the success of the enterprise was to be attributed to the fortunate circumstance of the presence in the squadron of a gentleman at once so trustworthy and so capable of performing the delicate duties devolved upon him.

The memorialist now asks that such additional compensation, besides his salary of \$500 per annum as clerk, shall be now allowed him as shall be proportionate to the importance of the services rendered.

The Committee on Foreign Relations in the Senate, in a favorable report upon a former memorial of the petitioner in 1857, say:

"In reply to a letter of inquiry addressed by the committee to the Navy Department, the Secretary under date of July 16, 1856, says: 'Clerks in the naval service are appointed by officers entitled to them with the sanction of the department. My impression has always been that in selecting their secretaries and clerks, the commodores endeavored to secure such as could aid them in their correspondence by their attainments in different languages. I am not aware of any precedent for extra pay on account of translating or interpreting performed by their clerks.' Whilst the committee are disposed to concur with the Secretary of the Navy in the opinion here indicated, that for the ordinary translating and interpreting incident to their position clerks in the naval service should not be entitled to receive extra compensation, yet they cannot but regard the present case as resting upon entirely different grounds. Mr. Portman's duties as interpreter in the conduct and negotiation of a treaty between our government and that distant and secluded empire involved much and delicate responsibility. They were beyond and additional to his regular duties as clerk to the commodore, and for their performance he is, in the opinion of the committee, properly entitled to additional compensation."

In fixing a rule for the compensation which the committee would recommend, they find that Congress have granted to W. Heine, as artist of the expedition, the sum of \$1,500 per year in addition to his salary of \$500 as master's mate.—(11 Statutes at Large, 543.) And the same sum per annum to Dr. James Morrow, as agriculturist.—(Idem, p. 500.)

The committee are of opinion that the services of Mr. Portman should surely not be rated lower than those of the above-mentioned persons.

Though it appears that the treaty was concluded in about one year after the squadron entered the bay of Jeddo, yet in view of the important preliminary labor as a translator and compiler performed by the memorialist, and his services afterwards in assisting in drawing up the history of the expedition, the committee are of the opinion that this compensation ought to extend to two of the three years he was attached to the service. They therefore report a bill in his favor for the sum of three thousand dollars, and recommend its passage.

I.

I certify that Mr. A. L. C. Portman, rated and receiving pay as captain's clerk in the United States squadron late under my command, rendered, in addition to his regular duties as clerk, important services as Dutch interpreter, for which he has not received any additional compensation.

M. C. PERRY,

Late Commanding U. S. Naval Expedition to Japan.

NEW YORK, November 26, 1855.

II.

I certify that Mr. A. L. C. Portman, rated captain's clerk, performed the extra duties of translator and interpreter during the whole period of the negotiations of Commodore M. C. Perry with the Japanese commissioners in 1853 and 1854, in a very satisfactory manner, in addition to his regular duties as clerk, and by order of the commodore.

As commander of the flag-ship "Mississippi," on her outward passage, it came under my observation that Mr. Portman was certainly engaged in translating from various works in different languages and compiling information on Japan, of which Commodore Perry, who placed implicit confidence in him, fully availed himself in his subsequent and important negotiations.

I believe from the character, responsibility, and the excellent performance of his extra services, that Mr. Portman is entitled to extra compensation, and fully recommend his petition to the favorable consideration of Congress.

S. S. LEE,

Commander United States Navy.

WASHINGTON, D. C., December, 1859.

III.

I have great pleasure in certifying to the ability and fidelity with which Mr. A. L. C. Portman discharged the duties of interpreter, during the negotiation of the treaty with Japan by Commodore Perry,

in 1853 and 1854. Mr. Portman was at the time rated captain's clerk, and his services were of the first importance, as I do not believe there was another person in the squadron capable of performing them.

It was not only while actually engaged in the negotiations that his services were so important; but by his labor in translating works on Japan into English from other languages on the passage out, Commodore Perry was furnished with much valuable information on the manners, customs, and peculiarities of the Japanese, of which he fully availed himself in his transactions with them. My opportunities of noticing his capacity and intelligence, and appreciating the value of his services, were perhaps greater than those of any one else, and I heartily recommend his petition to the favorable consideration of Congress.

H. A. ADAMS,
Captain of the Fleet on the Japan Expedition.

IV.

"THE REST," NEAR EASTON, MD,
January 31, 1856.

I hereby certify that Mr. A. L. C. Portman acted as interpreter in the Dutch language for Captain H. A. Adams, Lieutenant John Contee, and myself, on board the United States ship "Susquehanna," under my command, during the entire preliminary negotiations for the first landing of Commodore M. C. Perry in Japan.

Mr. Portman's valuable services were indispensable on that occasion, as the negotiations could not have progressed without him. His intelligence, and the tact he displayed in conversing with those singular people, the Japanese, together with his amiable, gentlemanly deportment, and honesty in stating faithfully what he was directed to say, elicited our admiration and thanks. I consider him justly entitled to a high compensation for his services as "interpreter" while serving on the Japan expedition.

FRANKLIN BUCHANAN,
Captain United States Navy.

V.

WASHINGTON NAVY YARD,
November 26, 1859.

I certify that Mr. A. L. C. Portman performed the extra duties of translating and interpreting in a very satisfactory manner, in addition to his regular duties as clerk to the late Commodore M. C. Perry, during his negotiations with the Japanese commissioners in 1853 and 1854, and during those negotiations frequent reference was had to abstracts translated and compiled by Mr. Portman from Dutch, French, and German works on Japan, for the use of, and by order of,

the commodore. I have no hesitation in saying that the services rendered by Mr. Portman were very valuable to Commodore Perry, who placed implicit confidence in him throughout the negotiations. His tact, and firm gentlemanly bearing, and honesty of purpose towards both parties secured him the friendship of the Japanese, which contributed much towards the final success of those negotiations.

FRANKLIN BUCHANAN,
Captain United States Navy.

VI.

NEW YORK, *January 2, 1856.*

I hereby certify that Mr. Portman has translated into English, for the use of the compiler of the report of Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan, *thirteen foolscap pages of manuscript.*

FRANCIS L. HAWKS.

Approved :

M. C. PERRY.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Fourth Auditor's Office, August 9, 1855.

SIR: In answer to your letter of the 7th instant, I inform you that Mr. S. W. Williams, Chinese interpreter, was on the rolls of the purser of the United States steam frigate Powhatan, from February 19 to August 31, 1854, at the rate of \$300 per month. There are no rolls of that vessel in this office for a later period than September 30, 1854.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. O. DAYTON.

A. L. C. PORTMAN, Esq., *Williamsburg, L. I.*

